MASTER THESIS

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Media framing of the Norilsk oil spill

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Declaration

- I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
- I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
- I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

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Abstract:

This study examines how the Norilsk oil spill in May 2020 was framed within four factors of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT): 1. Severity of the damage; 2. Crisis responsibility; 4. Crisis history; 5. Relationship history. Also, this study examines how media ownership and closeness of the media to the government influence the framing of Norilsk Oil Spill. Using content analyses, three Russian newspapers were analyzed - Novaya Gazeta, Rossiyskaya Gazeta, and Kommersant. The results demonstrated differences in usage and frequency of frames according to media ownership and closeness to the government. Also, findings revealed that there are differences in framing concerning time frame.

This thesis provides evidence that four factors in SCCT concepts (Severity of the damage, Crisis responsibility, Crisis history, Relationship history) can serve as frames in media framing analyses of crises. In addition, this study provides information for crisis managers and media professionals on how one particular crisis may be differently framed in different newspapers.

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Introduction

Media is an influential institution in society. It can affect the audience's beliefs and shape particular opinions. Ownership of media channels defines the power over society as it influences and affects it. Therefore the government wants to control the media and flow of information that reaches out to the audience. Democratic society solved this problem with the creation of media democracy and media freedom approaches. However, some countries still experience strict censorship, authoritarian control, and abuse against journalists behind the visibility of free media. The media system in Russia works this way.

For the last ten years, the independence of Russian media has been getting more restricted. According to research by Freedom House, media in Russia is defined as "not free." Furthermore, in 2020 the indication of freedom was 30 out of 100, and in 2021 - 20 points of freedom out of 100 (where 100 - is the highest indicator that implies total media freedom) (Freedom House, 2021). Authoritarian control of the media leads to distortion of democratic values, such as informing society on what is going on and hiding events.

Several cases in Russian history demonstrated how silence and hiding of events led to horrible consequences that affected and harmed societal and environmental spheres. One of the historical catastrophic events in Russia is the story of "The Kursk, One of the largest and most technologically advanced nuclear subs in the world, carrying a crew of 118 Russian sailors, had suffered a major, unexplained accident, and rapidly crashed to the ocean floor" (Robert Moore, 2003). The other case is the notable Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster that happened on April 26th, 1986, which is still the most devastating ecological disaster of the twentieth century. Radiation produced by the explosion of the reactor affected not just ecological landscapes but also human health.

Both catastrophes demonstrate how propaganda, misinformation, and silence lead to enormous environmental and social tragedies.

This thesis focused on the other hidden from Russian citizens and the rest of the world catastrophe - The Norilsk oil spill in May 2020. This catastrophe happened in the Siberian city of Norilsk on the vast power plant (Nornickel). Norilsk Nickel Power Plant (Nornickel) is the world's largest nickel and palladium producer. "Approximately 21,000 tonnes of oil leaked into Lake Pyasino, which serves as the basin for the Pyasina river, which runs into the Kara Sea, part of the Arctic Ocean" (BBC News, 2020).

It is crucial to mention that the media announced the accident only three days after the accident, and the start of rescue operations started three days after. In other words, before the moment when local citizens shared the photo of the horrifying red river that was a result of the oil spill, there was not any information about this event. Furthermore, stakeholders responsible for the event did not start the rescue operations before the information about the accident was publicly revealed.

After announcing the event on social networks, all Russian media outlets started informational debates that lasted for many weeks regarding who is guilty and why the information about the event was revealed only three days after the accident.

Different media covered this accident from different perspectives. This study examines how different newspapers presented the Norilsk Oil spill concerning media ownership and closeness of the media to the government influence.

This study uses the concept that named Framing. According to some studies, the media has various tools for changing and affecting society and framing one of these tools. With particular frames, reporters may change meanings to specific news stories. The conception of media framing is significant in media coverage as it affects reader's opinions and perceptions regarding the news story.

In this study, the media framing of the Norilsk oil spill in three online newspapers will be analyzed and examined.

Three online newspapers were selected to measure the differences in media framing - *Novaya Gazeta, Rossiyskaya Gazeta,* and *Kommersant*. The selection of newspapers is based on three major principles:

1. The media organization needs to be based in Russia

2. To be national

3. The last principle implies that newspapers have to be owned by different institutions (E.g., Government vs. Private corporations)

Rossiyskaya Gazeta (RG) is an official governmental edition owned by the Russian government. Novaya Gazeta (NG) is a private, oppositional edition that promoting liberal ideas and democratic movements. Kommersant is a liberal newspaper with a focus on business topics. Kommersant, as well as Novaya Gazeta, is a private edition. However, it is owned by Russian Kremlin-linked businessmen.

This study appeals to the conception of a situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) as the main framework to conduct frame analysis. Primary SCCT implies strategies to cope with reputational threats after the crisis with particular crisis response. SCCT defines potential reputational threat after a crisis by four factors: 1. Crisis responsibility; 2. The severity of the damage; 3. Crisis history; 4. Relationship history (Coombs, 2006). This conception can be helpful in the study because given factors outline the main topics that the media may embrace concerning the crisis. In other words, SCCT factors define the structure of determinants that will be perceived by the audience who read the news story and, as a consequence, will shape the opinion, interpretation, and attitude to the specific crisis. Thus, the prior privilege of chosen theory for this work is that SCCT identifies vital factors that define crises and allow us to analyze and explicate them.

Given conception outlines the primary and essential topics (factors) that we must pay attention to when analyzing news articles and discovering specific frames for analysis. Thus, looking at how newspapers framed the accident in terms of crisis responsibility, severity, crisis history, and relationship history factors may generate clear and profound analyses and evaluate the media framing of the crisis.

A content analysis technique was applied to measure and analyze how the Norilsk oil spill was framed in three different online newspapers. The research question of this study is "How does media ownership and closeness of the media to the government influence the framing of Norilsk Oil Spill?". To answer the research question and to conduct a more in-depth analysis within the search, two sub-questions were included:

1. Which frames were used in the media reports during the four months after the Norilsk oil spill accident?

2. What are the differences in the general use of frames over time in different online newspapers?

Particular hypotheses were suggested to answer the main research question:

Hypothesis 1. Media ownership and closeness of the media to the government directly influence the frame usage in a media.

Hypothesis 2. Pro-government media outlets are inclined to "pollute" informational space to distract the audience from severe current events.

According to the time frame and keywords, 494 articles were found, and 208 were selected for the main study and analyzed.

Frames revealed in selected articles were analyzed and compared, and the thesis's findings confirmed both suggested hypotheses. Firstly, media ownership and closeness to the government directly affect the frame usage of the event. Independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta framed the accident as it happened without underestimating and hiding significant facts and essential details. Among findings, revealing loyal relationships

between authority and management of Nornickel were found. Also, Novaya Gazeta framed the accident in Norilsk as a destructive catastrophe with consequences not just for the local citizens but for the whole Arctic circle.

Meanwhile, in pro-government newspaper the tendency to distract attention from the main details was identified. This finding confirms the second hypothesis. Rossiyskaya Gazeta and Kommersant indirectly defended Norkickel and local authorities, making others guilty of the ecological catastrophe. On the other hand, government newspapers framed the event in such a way to demonstrate the absence of severe consequences for the environment.

Structure

In the second chapter, the literature review for this thesis will be discussed. Firstly - Environmental communication in the media context, then framing media coverage and crisis communication. Afterward, the context of the Norilsk oil spill will be described. The third chapter will describe and explain the research methodology of this study. The results of this study will be analyzed, explained, and interpreted in chapter four. Finally, chapter five discusses the summary of the study, including the limitations of this thesis.

2. Literature review

2.1. Environmental communication in the media context

McLuhan argued that "The medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1967). He was the first who suggested that the media is not just a message carrier but a message itself. This conception was a framework for developing the other conception that implies the

significant role of the media in society - mediatization. The concept of mediatization refers to how the media impact and change processes in politics, religion, culture, and other spheres of society (Hjarvard, 2013).

Environmental issues are one of these social processes that are affected by media influence. Media form society's opinion and knowledge about particular events. This powerful institution defines processes in society and its attitude to environmental events (Horsley, 2016).

According to Hannigan (2006), "three major types of environmental events can be identified: milestones (Earth Day, the Rio Summit); catastrophes (oil spills, nuclear accidents, toxic fires); and legal/administrative happenings (parliamentary hearings, trials, release of environmental White Papers)" (Hannigan, 2006, p. 84). This study will focus on the catastrophes as it directly reflects a type of the chosen case study.

Media coverage of environmental accidents such as oil spills depends on how the "official experts" such as the government, industry, environmental organizations, and scientists frame this risk situation. Each of the "experts" or "primary definers," as Hannigan labeled them, provide a particular perspective on the accident and thereby form different realities of the situation. In other words, representation of the accident depends on the institution that defines it (Anderson, 2002).

However, the direct impact on "public opinion" remains in the hands of the media participants. In a media institute's power to choose what perspective on the "experts" situation will be chosen as a primary source. Provided perspectives and claims on a situation by the "official experts" are interpreted by the media participants for dissemination to the public. In this definition of scientific information, Anderson (2002) identified the significant problem of media coverage. According to him, simplifying the scientific perspectives for the general audience leads to distortion of the information.

Anderson characterized the environmental media coverage as centered on the "events" rather than on "issues." The media coverage approach focuses on events more inclined to blame a particular person or company in the performed crisis instead of providing the structural and different perspectives on a situation and looking at the crisis from different points of view.

Hannigan identified the negative side of this event-centered character of the environmental media coverage. He claims that focusing on individuals or corporations as a responsible entity for the occurred accident excludes the opportunity to consider that the given accident occurred due to broader problems in social and political institutions (Hannigan, 2006). This idea may be proved with the case of Norilsk Oil Spill, where the news media frames the accident to identify one responsible side. However, the media do not consider political issues that generated bureaucracy, corruption, and silence as the primary and only way to solve the problem.

In other words, environmental media coverage is characterized by a narrow and superficial way to look at the problem avoiding analyzes and searchings of the consequences in a broader sector and "outside" of the context of the problem, even though these "outside" problems might directly impact the occurrence of disasters and catastrophes.

Hannigan illustrated it with the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill that was framed so that the main explanation of the catastrophe was the alcohol problems of Captain Joseph Hazelwood. However, the media did not consider other important issues related to the political level, which could be a potential reason. "...Such as the recent history of cutbacks in maritime safety standards administered by the coastguard, or the oil industry's lack of capability in cleaning up large oil spills in settings such as Prince William Sound" (Hannigan, 2006, p. 85).

The other feature that defines environmental media coverage was identified by Hannigan and referred to the probability of "monocausal frames rather than frames involving long and complex causal networks" (Hannigan, 2006, p. 85). It was proved with a study by Spencer and Triche (1994). They found that toxic water pollution in 1988 in New Orleans was framed in the media due to one problem related to natural effect – drop of water level. The other reasons and combination of factors such as "Low water levels and a long-standing problem with discharges from chemical plants upriver from the city" were not represented in the media coverage. According to the study, that approach of a monocausal frame allowed media participants to stay away from the blaming and avoid an implication of the more powerful institutes that connected to "the state bureaucracy and the chemical industry" who could be responsible for the accident (Hannigan, 2006).

According to Anderson, the construction of the media's environmental problems implies comparing and contrasting "goodies" and "baddies" sides as focusing on a conflict issue. The author claims that this approach may be more appealing for the audience. Domination of the conflict-related issues as "battle," "survival," and "defeat" may be explained by popularity and growing environmental activism for the last decades. Thus, rhetoric and discussions about environmental problems are more inclined to seek a guilty individual and personalize conflict instead of the social structure problem (Anderson, 2002).

Anderson defines cultural and social values in the media message as an influential factor of decision and opinion-making by the audience. In environmental media coverage, such values are represented in visual coverage of the ecological disaster or problem and expressed by emotional images and videos of the environmental crisis results (such as natural objects and animals damaged by the particular ecological incident). However, Anderson claims that: "Coverage typically features images of

washed-up wildlife and sound bites that are designed to entertain the public rather than inform" (Anderson, 2002, p.13).

2.2. Framing media coverage

Media is a powerful institution that impacts the social system. The Media system has many tools that allow it to influence and shape different spheres of society. One of these tools is "Framing." Framing represents a tool that allows us to analyze how media present and interpret information for readers (Cissel, 2012). Framing defined by different scholars differently. According to scholar Entman: "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

Frames construct the reality around us as they construct our vision and perspectives (Hallahan, 1999). Frames define the message and may shape the readers' conclusion about this message. In other words, frames That is why one particular story may look differently, generate different emotions, and be differently perceived by the reader. With the opportunity of broad application in communication research, Framing is a vague conception in its application to the research design, or as Entman (1993) claimed that Framing is a "fractured paradigm". Scheufele (1999) also defined Framing as a vague conception for research because of a lack of a shared and clear underlying theoretical model that could be applied generally for studies.

In order to structure the definition of Framing and its comprehensive application in the study, I want to refer to Hallahan, who defined seven models of framing potentially applicable to the public relation field: Framing of situations, attributes, choices, actions, issues, responsibility, and news (Hallahan, 1999).

Situational Framing refers to the description of how discourse, communication, interactions, and language construct reality. Goffman (1974) described Framing as "the definition of a situation." By "definition," Goffman implied that frames might regulate and manage a specific event and regulate our subjective participant in it.

Framing of attributes refers to describing characteristics of an event, person, or product. Framing of attributes is frequently used in the advertisement sector to define (to frame) a specific attribute of a product by calling attention to certain features, shaping the opinion about it, and constructing consumers' perceptions of a particular product. Moreover, shape the decision-making process—the same process in the media framing. By calling attention to specific attributes and refocusing it away from others, "producers" or reporters may shape, construct and transform decisions, inferences, and choices. Thus, frames in the news stories or in the advertisement do not just provide us with details of a particular story or attribution of the product; they dictate what to think and how to think about particular messages (Hallahan, 1999).

Framing of risky choices implies an individuals' or organizations' choice between two presented independent options, "outlined in terms of gains or losses" (Hallahan, 1999, p.229). Framing of action focuses on an individual's decision-making, actions, or cooperation to achieve a certain goal. Hallahan defined a framing of issues as "a way to examine alternative interpretations of social reality" (Hallahan, 1999, p.217).

Framing of responsibility refers to the question of "who is to blame and to what extent?". Framing of responsibility is needed to regulate situations where the entity or an individual must show its acceptance or rejection of the blame and responsibility. Given frame and its practical application as a regulator of crises emerged in an organization. Public relations advisers can effectively frame the crisis in order to save corporate reputation and public trust.

The last model refers to news framing describing how news processes and stories are constructed and framed in the media channels. News framing models may include the other models discussed before.

Tuchman (1978) identified that news framing plays "an integral role" in constructing the social (Hallahan, 1999). Bennett (2007) described the news coverage in the media as the one that is primarily driven by income factors rather than ideologic one. "Gatekeepers" – journalists, reporters, editors, and other producers of media content tend to cover news in a way to appeal to the audience and to create more compelling content applying particular frames and concluding how one or another news story will be illuminated. Bennett is criticizing the media producers for emerging of "Insider syndrome" in a modern media system. Reporting on pro-governmental issues and on favorable issues for influencing corporations "gatekeepers" create an environment where dominative reality becomes objective reality. Prevailing one-sided opinions in the media landscape doubt a conception of democracy and range of a different perspective on a particular subject.

Iyengar (1996) defined Framing as a conception that significantly affects audiences' judgments, decisions, and choices. There are several cases in different fields beyond the media, such as economy, marketing, psychology, and politics, where Framing is applied. Society's opinions and choices are governed by particular frames defined to eliminate content in a certain way. For example, Iyengar (1996) identified two distinct frames of news coverage: the episodic and the thematic news frame. The episodic news frame refers to describing and illustrating particular one-time situations, avoiding the history and the background of what happened. The thematic news frame implies a more thorough and broad perspective on the news, including trends, background, and other additional reports (Iyengar, 1996).

Scheufele (1999) described that we could explain perception and interpretation of frames by the audience through social constructivism. For example, journalists and editors frame a story based on the purpose and restrictions of a specific edition and generated by personal experience and professional and personal judgments (Neuman, Just, Crigler 1992). However, perception and interpretation of frames by a reader depends on one's experience, interactions with others, and pre-existing knowledge or schemas (Scheufele, 1999).

This brief review allows us to identify the trends in media framing studies. These studies indicate that there is a relationship between media framing and its influence on social opinion. Media framing may impact and distort perception and shape new trends in different spheres of society, including culture, politics, religion, and environmental issues. Also, media framing plays a crucial role in readers' perceptions. It shapes the reader's interpretation and judgments about the event.

2.3. Crisis communication

This section was included for some reasons. Firstly, accidents, catastrophes, and other crises require a particular approach in the framing process, and this chapter provides the critical aspects of the crisis communication concept. Secondly, it allows us to look at different suggestions regarding crisis framing and identify key factors that define crises, analyze and explicate them within the research.

Benoit compared corporations with individuals when it is related to the image repair efforts as the image is equally important for individuals as for organizations (Benoit, 1997).

Benoit emphasized that "perceptions [by the salient audience] are more important than reality" among the fundamental conceptions of Image Restoration Theory." In other words, there is not a big deal if the organization is genuinely responsible for the poorly

performed acts. Instead, it is more important what the audience thinks about this act and if they see the blame of the particular firm in the occurred act (Benoit, 1997). Image Restoration Theory describing the message options that corporations during or after the performed crisis may provide. These image repair strategies include five broad categories: denial, evasion of responsibility, reduce offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification.

Researching the media coverage, we can trace how Norilsk corporation changed the restoration strategies from week to week and how it used different strategies during the research period. Denial of the responsibility and shifting the blame to the local authorities in "timeliness actions" was one of the company's strategies. Along with denial, the company used the strategy of Evasion of Responsibility. One of the forms of evasion of responsibility that Benoit identified was defeasibility. According to Image Restoration Theory, application of the defeasibility strategy organization argues about a lack of information about particular elements in the production process that lead to lack of control over the situation. Looking into media coverage of the Norilsk case, we can recognize that strategy is in companies' actions. For example, management of the company announced a lack of information regarding melting permafrost that led to weakening the tank's supports - the reason for the accident that is still concerned as the primary one. Moreover, in Nornickel's actions, some elements of Reducing Offensiveness of Event risk strategy are present. Also, within the research period, the media covered the strategy of Corrective actions of the Norilsk company.

Benoit's conceptions of Image Restoration Theory help analyze the crisis and identify the organization's strategies to save image during and after the crisis. For this study, I suggested using the theoretical background, taking into account the previous crisis experience of the company and its overall image in the past and nowadays.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) by Coombs was chosen as an appropriate background for this thesis. SCCT is based on the Attribution theory as it identifies which communication strategy would be relevant for a particular crisis. However, this approach differs from others as it provides an evidence-based framework" for how to minimize the damage by a crisis (Coombs, 2007, p.163). In other words, given conception is based on the research experimental methods instead of case studies. The prior privilege of chosen theory for this work is that SCCT identifies critical factors that define crises and allows us to analyze and explicate them.

Coombs highlights the importance and primary character of media coverage (especially news media) as a formator of organizations' reputation in crises and beyond it. According to him, "media framing" in communication studies aimed to analyze how exactly a crisis was framed and what reasons impacted the crisis using certain factors. Coombs connects the notion of "crisis type" with how this particular crisis was framed in media coverage. In other words, crisis type is "a form of the frame." Description of Crisis type refers to how the audience perceives and interprets a crisis and responsibility for the crisis (Coombs, 2007).

SCCT explains four Factors that define crises and Shape the reputational threat: 1. Severity of the damage; 2. Crisis responsibility; and two intensifiers 4. Crisis history; 5. Relationship history (Coombs, 2006).

Severity of the damage refers to the harm of any kind, including financial, emotional, or environmental, that a particular crisis may inflict. Crisis responsibility indicates how stakeholders attribute the blame and cause of the crisis to the organization. Crisis history assumes if the organization had similar crises in the past. Finally, relationship history explains the relationships between organization and stakeholder.

2.4. The context of the Norilsk Oil spill

Inhabitants of the Arctic zone in Scandinavia, the United States, Canada, and Iceland are on a journey toward a minimal waste lifestyle to save the planet, reduce a waste print, ensure a Future for all, and save the planet generally. However, in the other part of the Arctic zone, human mistakes and other non-excuses factors lead to the environmental catastrophe of the decades.

This paragraph will overview the context of the Norilsk Oil Spill and its impact not just on the Norilsk ecosystem but also on the vulnerable Arctic ecosystem in general.

On May 29th, 2020, in Russia's arctic north city Norilsk, one of the most significant oil spill accidents for the last decades happened. It happened in the Norilsk Nickel power plant (Nornickel), the world's leading nickel and palladium producer.

That was not possible to predict the consequences for the ecosystem. However, it was announced by the Greenpeace community that it could be compared to the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska.

The main reason for the accident was permafrost melting that led to a weakened storage tank. Violation of equipment requirements in the company or, in general, negligence of Nornickel about damaged objects was the second suggested reason for the accident.

The official announcement about the event emerged in national media only three days after the accident. In media coverage, different outlets blamed this Hiding of the accident Nornickel's management or local government. The first information about the accident and its scale emerged in social networks by local citizens who posted horrific photos of red rivers in Norilsk. After that, the rest of the country and the world found out about the event. Many media channels covered this accident, and many controversial opinions and points of view regarding the reasons for the accident emerged.

Some media outlets were inclined to point to climate change and permafrost melting as the main reason for the catastrophe. This version was the most popular and prior for television and national-wide newspapers. The other version is the negligence of Nornickel and its weak management system concerning plant equipment. This opinion was popular among internet independent editions and YouTube political and active environmental movements. This opinion was straightened by revealing previous Nornickel accidents that were also hidden and revealing relationships between Nornickel's management and government officials.

Oil spill catastrophe became significant as many other accidents that happened in the past were revealed after this. People started to share and discuss what happens with the environment and ecosystem in this city.

3. Method

3.1. Hypotheses

Suggestions regarding media ownership and its affection on the media framing based on the existing publications and information from the internet I summed up in the following hypothesis:

Hypotheses 1.

Media ownership and closeness of the media to the government directly influence the frame usage in a media.

Despite the proclamation of the media as government or non-government property, almost all Russian media are affected by Government influence. Most media institutes and printing houses represented as independent and commercial are owned by pro-Kremlin managers (Rodina, 2010).

The majority of the media stations, press markets, and news agencies are owned by private companies linked to the government (De Smaele, 2010). For instance, Gazprom, one of the wealthiest companies in Russia and a gas monopolist, "is amongst the four biggest media owners in the country" (Toepfl, 2013, p. 13). Likely this is an outcome of the monopoly of the opinions on the Russian media landscape.

I suggest that government media and pro-government media that are concentrated in the hands of businessmen loyal to the government are more inclined to frame events defending the government officials and related institutions.

From the other point, I assume that independent media are more inclined to frame events independently from the government interest. Thus, independent media frame the event based on the facts and research that make its media materials more reliable and faithful.

This study provides us with results demonstrating the connection between media ownership and how it affects frame usage.

Hypotheses 2.

Pro-government media outlets are inclined to "pollute" informational space to distract the audience from severe current events.

The informational war and desire to affect the audience opinion between pro-government and independent media lead to unexpected tactics and games. I suggested two tactics of the Russian government in order to silence and minimize its influence on the Russian media landscape.

The first version is widely discussed on the internet. Violence and abuse against journalists are widespread in Russia. "Attacks, arrests, office raids, and threats against journalists are familiar "(Freedom House, 2020). Lipman emphasized that even if the Kremlin is not directly responsible for that violence and abuse, it is responsible for the lawless environment that generates and provides spreading such unpunished practices concerning critical journalism (Lipman, 2010).

The second version relates to the "pollution" of the informational space. By "pollution," I mean creating empty media content that does not reveal or explain events that happened. This media content is related to insignificant details that do not make any sense and cannot change or form the reader's opinion about the event.

Such content is created to distract the reader from the main point of the event. Significantly, this "pollution" may be observed in pro-governmental media that proclaimed themself as liberated and independent from the Kremlin's opinion. Results in this research indicate that pro-government media outlets are inclined to "pollute"' informational space around the event and how they do that.

The research question of this study is "How does media ownership and closeness of the media to the government influence the framing of Norilsk Oil Spill?". To answer the research question and measure the differences in media framing, three online newspapers were selected - Novaya Gazeta, Rossiyskaya Gazeta, and Kommersant. As a tool for measuring and analyzing how the Norilsk oil spill was framed in three different online newspapers, I used a content analysis technique. The quantitative method of content analysis was used within this study as it is deductive in its approach (White and Marsh, 2006). The deductive approach implies the application of the existing hypotheses or theories for conducting the research (Hsieh, Shannon, 2005). In this study, an existing and relevant theory applied to conduct content analyses and the

differences in Framing of the Norilsk oil spill is a situational crisis communication theory (SCCT).

For this study steps of analyses were generated into three main categories: Generating Hypotheses, Determining Data for Analysis and sampling, Coding and Analyzing the Coded Data. Generated categories were applied, and the following order of the procedure came out.

3.2. Determining Data for Analysis and Sampling

For this study, critical factors of SCCT theory (Crisis responsibility, severity of the damage, Crisis history, and relationship history) define crises and indicate the main aspects and directions that we have to pay attention to further identification of frames itself.

As a data collection unit, I used the databases on the website for each newspaper. The unit of analysis for this study articles in both online newspapers was selected according to the keywords.

First of all, I conducted the pilot study for defining certain frames. To identify specific frames for analyses, I collected the first 20-25 articles in each of three newspapers according to the criteria described below. A small sample was chosen because of the expected difficulty in the selection process. Articles were only included in the analysis if:

1. Articles were published within the following period July 1st, 2020 (the day of announcement about the accident) - 30.09.2020 (precisely four months later). This frame was chosen because many articles were published during four months, and after four months, there was only a minor number.

2. Articles should include the keyword "Norilsk" (The more precise keywords such as "Norilsk oil spill" would not work in that case because the specificity of the Russian language and several results could be missed).

3. Articles should be directly associated with the oil spill in Norilsk (including previous oil spills). Any other articles that reported about other occurred events in Norilsk were not selected.

4. Articles that reported governments announcements related to the Norilsk oil spill, such as (1) emergency declaration and (2) amendments to the Law, were not included as they imply more informative character and not framing the accident.

To conduct observation and solve the third research sub-question that aimed to measure the differences in the use of frames over time, I divided analyzed articles into groups selected by the week they were published. This method provides us to analyze and identify changes in framing the accident from week to week.

Firstly, within the pilot study, I thoroughly read the articles of both selected newspapers. The main point of this step was to identify the most frequent topics that were embraced within the Norilsk oil spill. As a result, it was possible to (1) compare how several particular topics were framed in different online newspapers; (2) compare how framing the same topics changed with time during the research period.

Some of the articles that did not relate to the topic were removed from the sample. After reviewing the articles during the pilot study, I identified particular subjects that may be relevant in defining and analyzing the crisis according to the factors of SCCT. The following subjects in this study were found and identified as attributions.

Identified attributions were analyzed, and some of them were generated into the categories that form frames for this study - Responsibility, Timeliness, Hiding and understatement accident scale, and Consequences. However, some of the attributions were not generated into the particular generated frames as they represent frames

themself - Involvement in corruption and Complaints of citizens frames (Table 1). Then I defined the correlation between identified and generated frames and four significant factors that define crises according to SCCT.

After analyzing the relation, major crisis factors and found frames were correlated and presented in the following order (Table 1). The factor of Crisis responsibility involves frames of Responsibility and Timeliness and Hiding and understatement accident scale. The second factor - Severity of the damage includes a frame of Consequences. Finally, the relationship history factor represents Involvement in corruption and Complains of citizens frames. As we can see from the table 1, some of the frames include attributions. These attributions allow us to look into this frame in detail, analyze, interpret and conclude most reliably, and detect which attributions are the most repeated.

When data discovered in the pilot study was analyzed, and frames and attributions were identified, I started the main study and selected articles according to the criteria described above. To collect the news stories, I used the keyword "Norilsk," and 494 articles were found from July 1st, 2020 to September 30th, 2020. Therefore, according to the criteria described above, 208 articles were selected for the main study.

Table 1. News frames

FRAMES		Attributions	Characteristics
Crisis Responsibility	Responsibility	Direct criticism against Nornickel	• The news articles directly blame Nornickel for the accident. They refer to: • violations of technical equipment requirements and that accidents could likely be avoided in case of periodical expertise/equipment deterioration.

				also, refer to inaction and negligence to damaged objects that may be a reason for the accident
		Indirect criticism against Nornickel		The news articles indirectly criticize Nornickel as a responsible entity.
		Reasons beyond control		the accident happened because of sagged ground under the tank, and its bottom came off
		Negligence of the official responsibilities from the local government side		Refers to inaction and negligence to damaged objects that may be a reason for the accident
		Contradictions in blaming		Overall complexity in blaming and criticizing the organization
		Nornickel redeems itself		The company is environmentally friendly and wants to pay for everything and develop a system of production that concerns eco problems.
	Timeliness	Debates about timeliness		Debates about the time when local authorities were informed about the accident and attempted to define the guilty side: Nornickel - because it did not inform the local authority at a time or local government - because it did not take any actions and response
		Negative timeliness of local government response		The local government was notified about the accident, but did not initiate any actions.
		Overall negative timeliness		How slowly any type of reaction or response occurred
		Positive timeliness of local government response		Operative actions of authorities concerning analysis, evaluations, and liquidations of the accident
		Negative timeliness of Nornickel staff		Nornickesl's responsibility concerning timeliness actions. Nornickel did not notify local authorities.
	Hiding and understatement accident scale	By Nornickel		Nornickel tried to hide the information about the accident.

		By Authorities	The local authority was informed about the accident but tried to hide it and solve the situation on the local level, avoiding elevation on the federal level.
		Interference in the journalists and emergency workers activities	Nornickel and/or government officials do not let to work and interfere in the investigations of the problem by emergency inspectors and journalists
Relationship history	Involvement in corruption	-	News stories report on authority's loyalty to Nornickel/relationships between government and nor nickel top management/Nornickel governs the city.
	Complains of citizens	-	News stories report on citizens complains about Nornickel activities and neglect attitude to the environment and the city
Severity of damage	Consequences	Successful Spill liquidation (in the process)	● positive predictions ● Oil spot was stopped during the first days/weeks of rescue operations /Underground water is not polluted/liquidation of the consequences will take weeks. ● nature is not threatened by the accident ● claiming the fact of overestimating the crisis
		Lasting damage	The oil spill will inflict significant damage to the environment and society that is impossible or unlikely to prevent.
		Contradiction	The news articles report on contradiction consequences of the accident
	Crises in the past	Negative experience	The news articles report on the other crises that happened with Nornickel in the past
		Successful liquidation experience	● Successful liquidation experience ● or the scale is overestimated and not as critical ● info about how affected soil and water are replaced.
Crisis history	Crises in present	other crises	other crises related to Nornickel in presence.

3.3. Coding

To code the articles collected and identified as appropriate for the study, I discovered the formulation of a YES/NO question as to the most effective way of coding for this study.

To identify if an article contains the frames defined for this research, I designed YES/NO questions for every frame indicated in table 1. Questions imply the existence of attributions indicated in the third column of Table 1 and, consequently, the existence of the frames related to those particular attributions.

The procedure of coding includes thorough research of each unit of analysis - articles. After a thorough reading, I analyzed each article with coding questions. For every question, there are only two options of the response - yes or no. In the coding system, YES is equivalent to 1, and NO is equivalent to 0.

Following questions that reveal the existence of frames were designed.

Table 2. Coding questions

Frames	YES/NO Questions
Responsibility	● Does the news article directly blame Nornickel in the accident? ● Does the news article indirectly criticize Nornickel as a responsible entity? ● Does the news article report on reasons beyond control? ● Does the news article report on contradictions in blaming?
Timeliness	● Does the news article report on debates about timeliness? ● Does the news article report on Negative timeliness of local government response? ● Does the news article report on Overall negative timeliness?

	● Does the news article report on Positive timeliness of local government response? ● Does the news article report on Negative timeliness of Nornickel staff?
Hiding and understatement accident scale	● Does the news article report on Nornickel's attempts to hide the information about the accident? ● Does the news article report on Local authorities' awareness about the accident but tried to hide it and solve the situation on local level avoiding elevation on the federal level?
Involvement in corruption	● Does the news article report on authority's loyalty in relation to Nornickel/relationships between government and nornickel top management/nornickel governs the city?
Complains of citizens	● Does the news article report on citizens complaining about nornickel activities and neglect attitude in relation to the environment and the city?
Consequences	● Does the news article report on Successful Spill liquidation (in process)? ● Does the news article report on significant damage to the environment and society that is impossible or unlikely to prevent? ● Does the news article report on the contradictory consequences of the accident?

4. Results and discussion

In exploring the Norilsk Oil spill media framing, this thesis offers the answer to the question "How media ownership and closeness of the media to the government influence the framing of Norilsk Oil Spill?".

The results in this thesis confirmed suggested hypotheses to this question. Suggestions regarding media ownership and its affection on media framing were based on the existing studies, publications, and information from the internet. The first hypothesis assumed that "Media ownership and closeness of the media to the government directly influence the frame usage in a media."

As the freest and independent newspaper, I suggested that NG provide more accurate and reliable information about events in Norilsk. Results were confirmed, and NG was the only one of selected newspapers that brought up topics about corruption and the connection between the management of Nornickel and the government. Also, NG mentioned the suffering of the Norilsk local population, who fought for the local ecosystem with Nornickel within years. Also, NG mentioned previous accidents in Norilsk related to Nornickel that were hidden.

Results about government edition RG were also expected. RG framed the Norilsk Oil spill avoiding directly blaming the government or Nornickel management. The character of reporting was more informative than evaluating. It was identified that articles did not contain the information "beyond" the event for finding out the reasons for the accident. Reporting about the event did not attempt to consider political issues that generated bureaucracy, corruption, and silence related to the accident. Instead, previous accidents were brought up in the context that they were successfully illuminated.

Suggestions regarding Kommersant also were confirmed with results. I suggested that pro-government media that are concentrated in the hands of businessmen loyal to the government are more inclined to frame events defending the government officials and related institutions or distraction from the main issues of the event. Results demonstrated that mostly frame usage in RG and Kommersant was similar with a minor disagreement.

Answering the first sub-question of this study allows us to look into the relationship between media ownership and its affection on media framing more profoundly. The question was, "Which frames were used in the media reports after the Norilsk oil spill accident?":

Responsibility frame

The following vital findings regarding framing use frequency were discovered. First, the responsibility frame was identified as the most general for framing the Norilsk oil spill among all three selected newspapers. A suggested explanation for this finding might be an attempt by each of the online newspapers to reveal the truth and provide reasonable explanations concerning who is responsible for the accident. However, usage of the responsibility frame was different in selected newspapers. Second, it is interesting to note that attribution "Direct criticism against Nornickel" was the most frequent in liberal

and independent NG almost twice more often than in two other newspapers. However, the results showed that RG and Kommersant used the other attribution "Indirect criticism against Nornickel." It may indicate an attempt of the reporters in RG and Komm to give a negative evaluation to the situation in Norilsk, but make it delicately avoiding direct pointing at the guilty side.

The following attribution indicated that only Kommersant framed responsibility justifying Nornickel. "Nornickel redeems itself" attribution implies that the company is trying to remove and atone for the accident. This result may be explained by the fact that Kommersant, as a pro-governmental edition, wanted to demonstrate Nornickel better and create a loyal and positive attitude among readers about Nornickel.

Timeliness frame

The timeliness frame appeared less within the research than the responsible frame. However, some exciting tendencies were identified.

Hiding and understatement accident scale

Confirmation of a suggested hypothesis regarding media ownership and its affection on media framing may also find a place within the Hiding and understatement accident scale frame.

NG used the Hiding and understatement accident scale frame significantly more often than RG and Kommersant. This crucial finding confirmed how pro-government newspapers try to avoid these issues. Only NG was straight enough to reveal the information and report on the Hiding of information by Nornickel and government and interference in the journalists and emergency workers activities from local authorities and Nornickel side.

NG was the only source among selected newspapers that mentioned precisely how the accident was announced initially. In all likelihood, if the information and pictures with the red river from social media would not spread to the rest of Russia, this accident would stay in the shadows as many other accidents that were hidden by Nornickel before.

It is important to note that RG and Komm, in their articles, mentioned the announcement of the oil spill on the third day of the catastrophe was the blame of the particular workers and top management of Nornickel, as well as that the local government could not be aware of this occurrence. This finding may be related to the most frequent frame within the research - crisis responsibility frame and tendency to point to the "weak players."

Involvement in corruption frame

The findings regarding Involvement in the corruption frame that was identified explain the underdevelopment and disability of the Russian media system. Articles that covered Involvement in corruption were noticed only in NG. With its independent and objective way of working, Kommersant did not mention anything about hidden connections of government and Nornickel. As expected, RG did not cover corruption or any authority's loyalty to Nornickel/relationships between government and Nornickel top management.

Complaints of citizens frame

A prominent finding regarding Complaints of citizens frame was identified. It was expected that the given frame would be covered only in NG. However, it is essential to note that independent media revealed how long local citizens suffered from Nornickel's accident fault. Before that accident, for decades, the population of Norilsk and its region lived in their small world where Nornickel made rules of how people should live. Also, it is vital to mention that many different accidents with Nornickel faults occurred before the Norilsk oil spill in 2020. However, they were hidden.

Considering all of these facts, it is evident that RG and Kommersant did not mention citizens' complaints to protect governments and Norkickel's interests.

Consequences frame

Regarding consequences, frame results were expected. RG as a representative of government interests, framed only positive consequences. NG did not mention about positive results of the accident at all, which is entirely rational and has a background because, for the first weeks of the accident elimination process, there were not any positive updates regarding the accident liquidation.

Lasting damage attribution was mentioned with the most frequency in NG, which is also evident as this newspaper differs from two others as objective and straight to report about faithful facts that occurred. However, unfortunately, the accurate picture of what happened during 1-18 weeks of the accident (the time frame of the present research) - there was only lasting damage as the oil spread by water and air and equipment that was provided could not help stop this flow.

Analyzing the attribution of crises in the past, it is also important to note that negative experiences, unsuccessful liquidation, and harmful consequences were found in NG and RG. Revealing these facts from the past by RG was quite an expected finding.

It is interesting to note that Komm was the only newspaper that mentioned the positive experience in liquidating the accidents caused by Nornickel in the past.

The second hypothesis assumes that pro-government media outlets are inclined to "pollute " informational space to distract the audience from severe current events.

This suggestion was confirmed as the following result was revealed. According to the study results, attribution Negative timeliness of local government response was used with the highest indicator by RG. However, the attribution Positive timeliness of local

government response was also mentioned in articles of RG. Also, the results of the study showed that RG used an attribution Negative timeliness of Nornickel staff. These controversial findings and overall activity of RG in timeliness framing may be explained as an attempt of RG to write more about timeliness, provide more meaningless facts and confuse the audience for distortion of the informational space around the Norilsk Oil Spill.

The second sub-question of the research was "What are the differences in the general use of frames over time in different online newspapers?". Charts 14, 15, and 16 indicate results that were found.
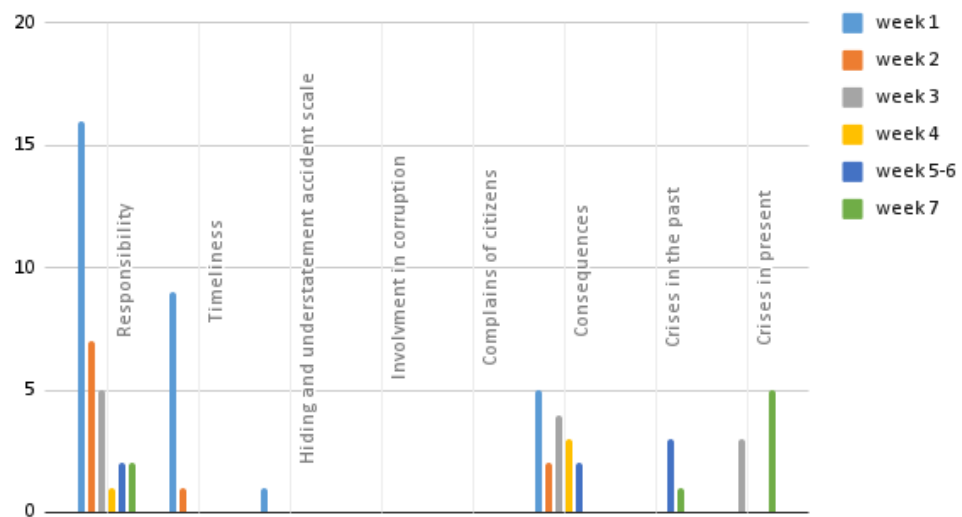
NG
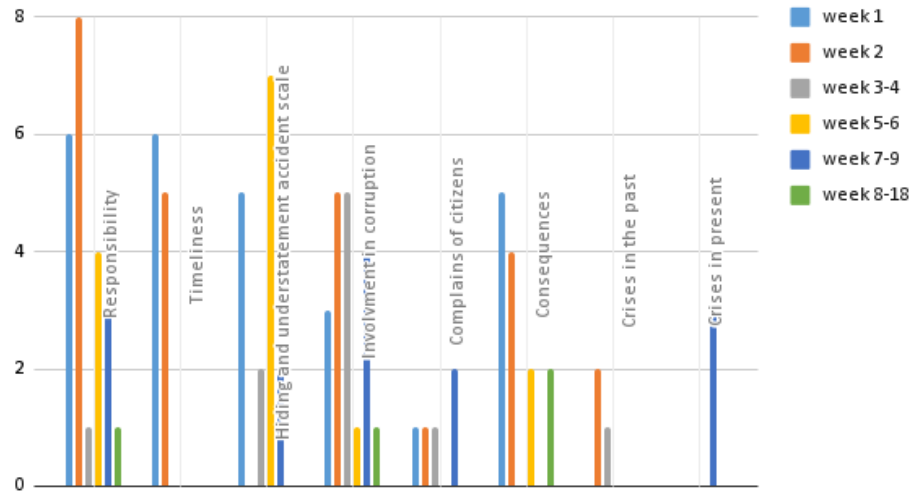
RG
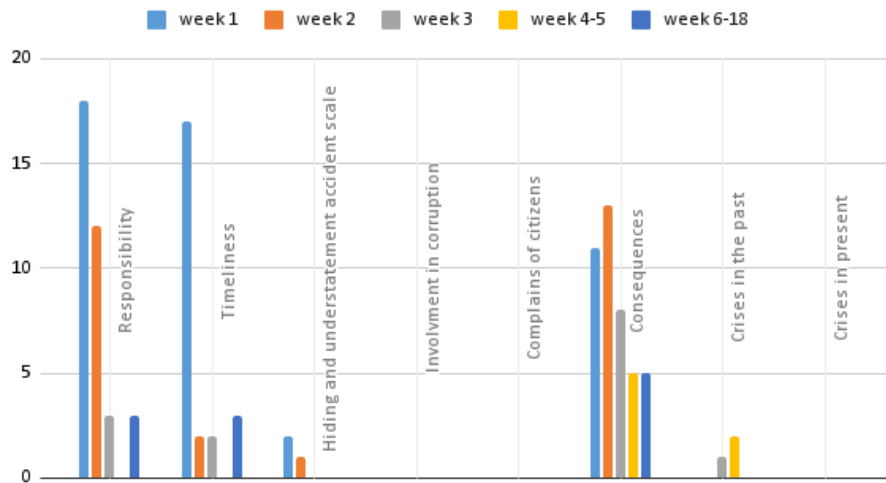
Kommersant

First of all, the most frequent frame - responsibility was framed more often during the second week after the disaster in NG. However, in RG and Komm, the responsibility frame emerges more often during the first week after the oil spill. This result may be explained by the fact that NG during the first week paid more attention to possible consequences for the environment and ecosystem instead of blaming possible responsible sides. The following results confirm my suggested interpretation.

In NG results indicated eight articles where the responsibility frame was mentioned during the first week after the accident. Nevertheless, in RG that number was - 17 articles, and in Komm - 16 articles.

Another important finding was that in NG the frame of Hiding and understatement of accident scale met more frequently during 5 - 6 weeks after the accident. For example, seven mentions during the 5-6 weeks compared to 5 mentions during the first week and two mentions during 3-4 weeks.

These results may be related to the fact that during 5-6 weeks, approximately one month after the accident, reporters and journalists in NG had more evidence-based investigations and journalistic research that pointed to the responsible figures who initiated Hiding and silence of the accident. In other words, this finding confirms the first suggestion described in this chapter regarding covering the responsibility frame. Reporters in NG in comparison to NG and Komm did not point and blame suggested responsible sides of the event during the first weeks as they do not have any evidence to do so. Instead, they started to mention particular stakeholders and blame them only after research and investigations. Significantly important finding as it demonstrates that NG, compared to RG and Komm, does not create the news and articles just for "creating the content" and filling the information space with useless non-confirmed and based on nothing reports as it happened with two other selected newspapers.

The current study found that all three selected newspapers mentioned a frame of timeliness just during the first and the second week. The frame of timeliness refers to operative actions and responses to the accident from the stakeholders. NG covered the timeliness frame almost with the same frequency during the first and the second week (5 and 6 articles respectively, where this frame was mentioned). However, in RG and Komm, the difference between the first and the second week was crucial. In komm, during the first week after the accident, nine articles covering the timeliness frame were discovered. During the second week - one article. In RG - 17 articles within the first week and two articles in the second week.

There are some suggested explanations for this result. First of all, It seems possible that NG is not just stopped to cover timeliness after the first week, probably the frame of timeliness proceeded into the frame of Hiding and understatement of the scale of accident which actively starts to emerge since the three weeks and after that is staying the most frequent frame during 5 and 6 weeks. In other words, during the two first weeks after the accident, NG was inclined to blame local authorities or Nornickel responsible for non-operative actions and slow response. However, since the third week, NG started to blame stakeholders for a more severe attitude - Hiding and understatement of the accident scale.

Interpreting the abovementioned results and considering frames occurrence order in NG, we may suggest that lack of operative analysis, evaluations, and liquidations after the accident was not the result of the slow response or deficiency of equipment and people. More likely, the problem of slow actions was based on failed attempts to hide the accident from society and media outlets. In other words, responsible sides expected that the accident would stay invisible and avoided eliminating the accident. However, unexpected situations and revealing of the occurred accident made them do so and

come up with the excuse for slow actions and lack of resources, refusing the Hiding and silent about the accident.

4.1. Comparing results with other studies

As the accident is comparably recent, there are no results that have been previously described. Nevertheless, the findings were compared to the other study that observed media framing of oil spill accidents. According to recent studies, the most crucial finding suggested that crisis responsibility is the most frequent frame in covering the Oil Spill. Following the present results, a previous study that examined 247 crises situations by An and Gower has demonstrated that the responsibility frame was the most frequent in Framing of crises situations (2009). This result reflects the BP Gulf oil spill study by Crytzer (2011), who also discovered the responsibility frame among the most frequent frames within media framing. Karter (2017) suggested that crisis responsibility is the most frequent frame in covering the Hebei Spirit Oil Spill - this suggestion is also in agreement with those obtained in the present study. However, the other finding regarding the use of frames is contrary to the study that examined Hebei Spirit Oil Spill (Karter, 2017). Karter concluded that the severity of the damage (represented by consequences frame in this study) was more frequent in the Korean media landscape. In other words, Korean newspapers appealed more to how much the Hebei Spirit oil spill impacted "the amount of financial, physical, and environmental harm, rather than the cause of this crisis" (Karter, 2017). In the Norilsk Oil spill, the media pay more attention to the reason, cause, and blaming different stakeholders instead of communicating about ecological and environmental damage and how to solve it.

Repeated usage of the responsibility frame in this study confirmed Anderson's (2002) suggestion that framing environmental communication is more inclined to blame and point at organizations or particular persons instead of providing the structural and different perspectives on a situation and looking at the situation crisis from different points of view.

Hannigan (2006) doubted the same idea about environmental media coverage. He claims that focusing on individuals or corporations as a responsible entity for the occurred accident excludes the opportunity to consider that the given accident occurred due to broader problems in social and political institutions. This idea may be proved with this research and the case of Norilsk Oil Spill, where the news media frames the responsibility to identify one guilty side. However, the media outlets do not consider political issues that generated bureaucracy, corruption, and silence as the primary and only way to solve the problem.

Anderson (2002) suggested that environmental media coverage inclines to compare and contradict "goodies" and "baddies" sides as focusing on a conflict issue. We can observe this suggestion in the present study. For example, we can see the contradiction of government and Nornickel against Norilsk citizens in NG where government and Nornickel - bad sides and citizens are good. Alternatively, in RG and Komm - Nornickel (good side)/responsible workers guilty of the accident (wrong side).

However, according to the research results, only one online newspaper was straight enough to consider the oil spill accident not just as a separate accident but as a result of many factors that include bureaucracy, corruption, and silence. This prominent finding from the analysis is that only NG is independent and the most reliable and objective source.

4.2. Statistics of frame frequency

The following part of the work contains a summary of statistics of the frame frequency as a result of coding data.

For demonstration and comprehension of the general results of the research, I designed table 3. The tables as mentioned above illustrate frames of Responsibility, Timeliness, Hiding, and understatement accident scale and Consequences with related attributions described in the last part of the study. Some of the attributions - Involvement in corruption and Complaints of citizens were not generated into the particular generated frames as they represent frames themself.

Table 3. News frames of the Norilsk Oil Spill in Russian online newspapers

Frame		Attributions	RG		KOMMERSANT		NG	
			Units	%	Units	%	Units	%
		Direct criticism against Nornickel	10.0	12.2	14.0	17.1	16.0	36.4
		Indirect Criticism against Nornickel	2.0	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Reasons beyond control	13.0	15.9	3.0	3.7	1.0	2.3
		Negligence of the official responsibilities from the local government side	8.0	9.8	6.0	7.3	3.0	6.8
		Contradictions in blaming	3.0	3.7	9.0	11.0	4.0	9.1
	Responsibility	Nornickel redeems itself	0.0	0.0	9.0	11.0	0.0	0.0
		Total for frame	36.0	43.9	41.0	50.0	24.0	54.5
Responsibility		Debates about timeliness	5.0	6.1	4.0	4.9	2.0	4.5
	Timeliness	Negative timeliness of local government response	8.0	9.8	1.0	1.2	3.0	6.8
		Overall negative	1.0	1.2	5.0	6.1	3.0	6.8

		timeliness						
		Positive timeliness of local government response	3.0	3.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Negative timeliness of Nornickel staff	7.0	8.5	1.0	1.2	3.0	6.8
		Total for frame	24.0	29.3	11.0	13.4	11.0	25.0
	Hiding and understatement accident scale	By Nornickel	3.0	3.7	1.0	1.2	8.0	18.2
		By Authorities	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.2	3.0	6.8
		Interference in the journalists and emergency workers activities	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	11.4
		Total for frame	3.0	3.7	2.0	2.4	16.0	36.4
Relationship history	Involvement in corruption	-	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.0	43.2
		Total for frame	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.0	43.2
	Complains of citizens	-	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	11.4
		Total for frame	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	11.4
Severity of the damage	Consequences	Successful Spill liquidation (in process)	28.0	34.1	15.0	18.3	0.0	0.0
		Lasting damage	11.0	13.4	7.0	8.5	13.0	29.5
		contradictions	3.0	3.7	1.0	1.2	0.0	0.0
		Total for frame	42.0	51.2	23.0	28.0	13.0	29.5
Crisis history	Crises in the past	Negative experience	3.0	3.7	0.0	0.0	3.0	6.8
		Successful liquidation experience	0.0	0.0	4.0	4.9	0.0	0.0
		Total for frame	3.0	3.7	4.0	4.9	3.0	6.8
	Crises in present	other crisis	0.0	0.0	11.0	13.4	3.0	6.8
		Total for frame	0.0	0.0	11.0	13.4	3.0	6.8
		TOTAL number of articles	82	100%	82	100%	44	100%

To represent the universal picture and general comprehension of the research, I

designed table 3 according to the following conception. The first three columns (Frames

and attributions) show the title of frames and attribution from table 1. The following columns represent indications that are related to each of the online newspapers - Rossiyskaya Gazeta (RG), Kommersant (Komm), and Novaya Gazeta (NG). Each of the newspapers consists of two columns with relevant numbers that indicate the number of articles (columns "UNIT") that show the number of articles covering a particular frame. The other column indicates the percentage (Column "%") of the researched articles covering a particular frame concerning the total number of articles within a particular online newspaper. The percentage was necessary for comparing three newspapers as the total number of articles in different newspapers is distinct.

In order to simplify perception and overall understanding of the results and discovered data, I represented them in diagrams in the following order. Each frame represents statistics about how many times this specific frame was mentioned in three online newspapers. By this practical and straightforward method, we could see, read, analyze and interpret the information we get from the content analyses method and compare how different online newspapers are represented within one particular frame. Thus, we can visually define tendencies, trends, differences, and similarities within one frame among three online newspapers that frame the Norilsk Oil spill.

## Responsibility

Chart 1. Responsibility frame

Responsibility frame (%)
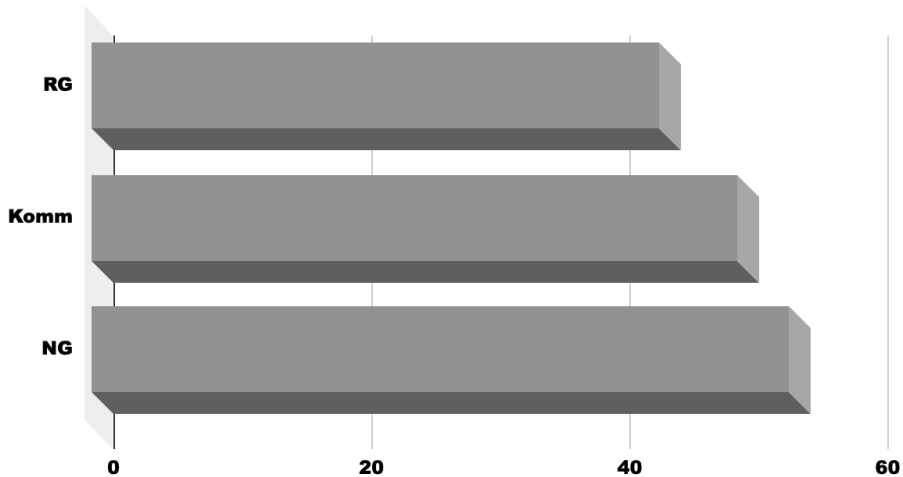
According to chart 1, the responsibility frame appeared quite frequently among all three online newspapers Rossiyskaya Gazeta (43,9%), Kommersant (50%), and Novaya Gazeta (54%). The share of articles that cover the responsibility frame is relatively high. The responsibility frame includes six attributions that allow us to look into this frame in detail, analyze, interpret and conclude most reliably, and detect which attributions are the most repeated within the responsibility frame, allowing us to uncover and analyze how responsibility is framed in selected newspapers.

Chart 2. Responsibility frame - attributions

Responsibility frame - attributions (%)
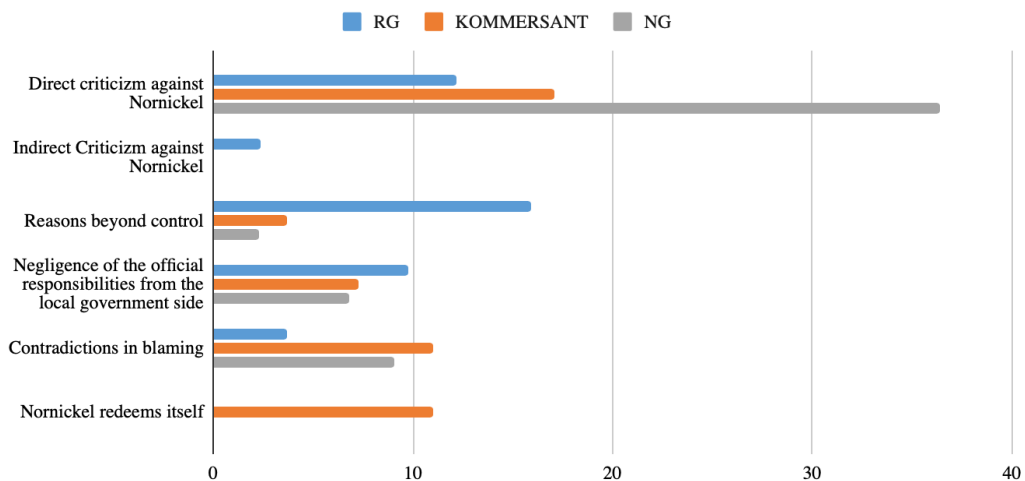
Looking at chart two, we can observe some trends among articles that were analyzed. Firstly, attribution "Direct criticism against Nornickel" notably prevailed in articles of Novaya Gazeta (36.4%) in comparison to 12,2% and 17,1% in RG and Kommersant, respectively. The following attribution, "Indirect criticism against Nornickel," was mentioned only in RG, indicating 2,4% from the overall number of selected articles. Newspapers Komm and NG did not mention any critical notions concerning Nornickel indirectly.

Attribution "Reasons beyond control" was mentioned in RG articles with a significant interval (15,9%) in comparison to 3,7% and 2,3% in other selected newspapers. The following remarkable difference between selected newspapers is bringing up the attribution "Nornickel redeems itself." The afore-mentioned attribution was met in 11% of the overall analyzed articles in Kommersant. However, RG and NG showed 0% of mentions of given attribution in their article.

Timeliness

Chart 3. Timeliness frame
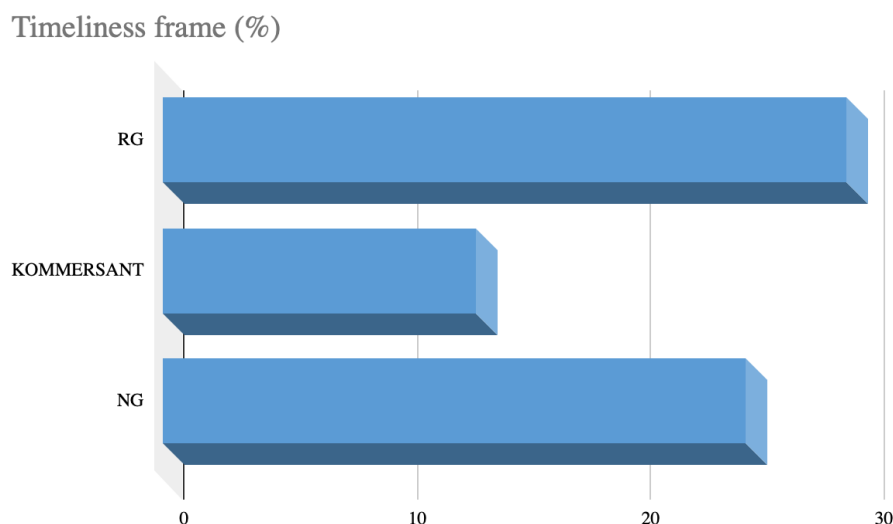
Chart 4. Timeliness frame - attributions

45

Timeliness frame - attributions (%)
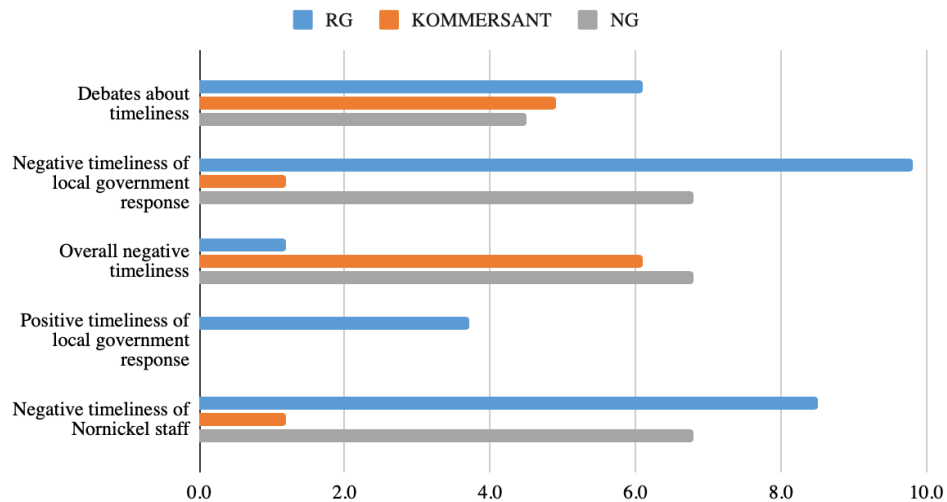
Mentions of the Timeliness frame more frequently in RG 29,3%and NG 25%. Looking at attributions to understand and analyze a given frame more thoroughly, we can notice the following tendencies. Firstly, attribution Negative timeliness of local government response was met among RG (9,8%) and NG (6.8%) with much higher frequency in comparison to Kommersant (1,2%). The other attribution indicates that Kommersant and NG reached approximately similar indications of the mention of Overall negative timeliness. Meantime RG consists of only 1.2% of this attribution in its articles. However, G was the only newspaper that mentioned the Positive timeliness of local government responded with an indicator of 1.2%. In the other researched newspapers, the attribution was not discovered. The other attribution Negative timeliness of Nornickel staff was met in RG and NG with almost similar indicators 6,8% and 7%. However, Kommersant mentioned this attribution in only 1.2% of the overall number of selected articles.

Hiding and understatement accident scale

Chart 5. Hiding and understatement accident scale

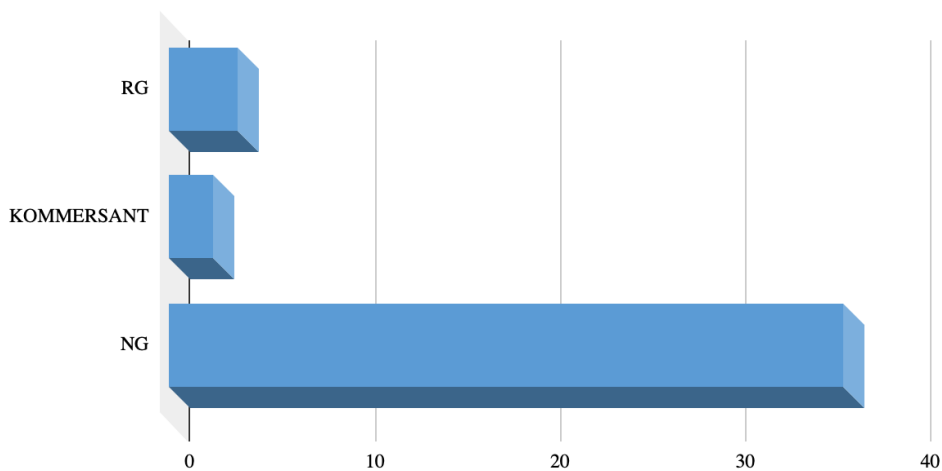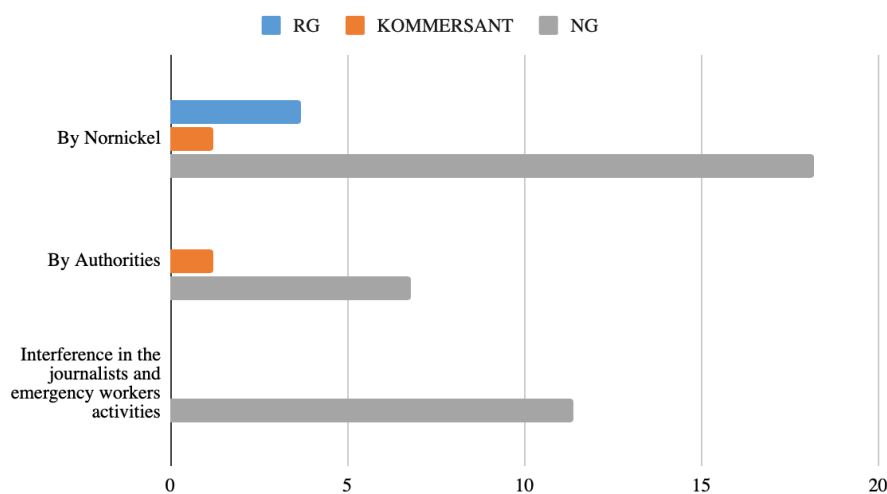Hiding and understatement accident scale frame (%)

Chart 6.Hiding and understatement accident scale - attributions

Hiding and understatement accident scale - attributions (%)

In the attribution Hiding and understatement accident scale by Nornickel, NG shows the highest indicator in comparison to RG and Kommersant. Attribution Hiding and understatement accident scale by authority NG again shows the higher percentage of the mentioning than Kommersant. RG in the given attribution is not presented. The last attribution of this frame - interference in the journalist's and emergency worker's activities was identified only in NG.

Involvement in corruption and complaining of citizens

Both mentioned frames were identified only in NG. According to the research, RG and
Kommersant did not cover Involvement in corruption and citizens' complaints in their
media space. Looking at the charts, we can see that mention of the corrupted
Involvement by Nornickel was frequent - 43,2% from the overall number of researched
articles. The frame of citizens' complaints was identified as a less frequent frame.
However, 11,4% compared to the complete absence of this frame in other online
newspapers.
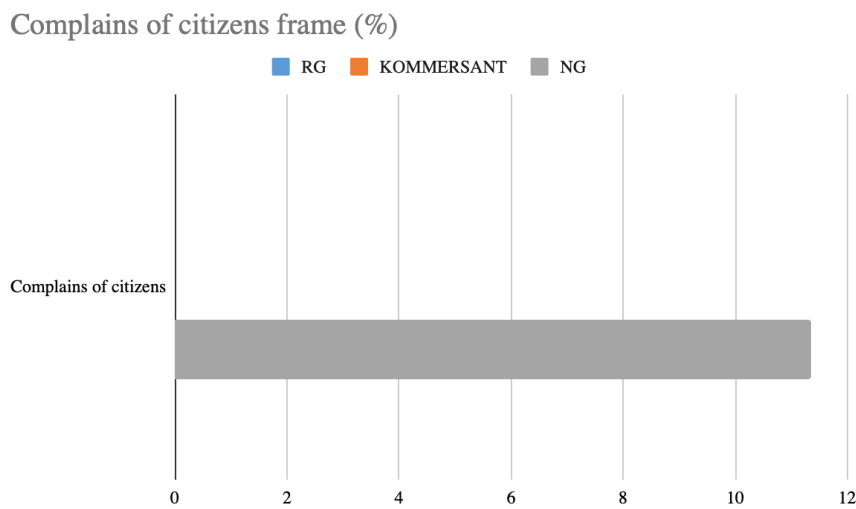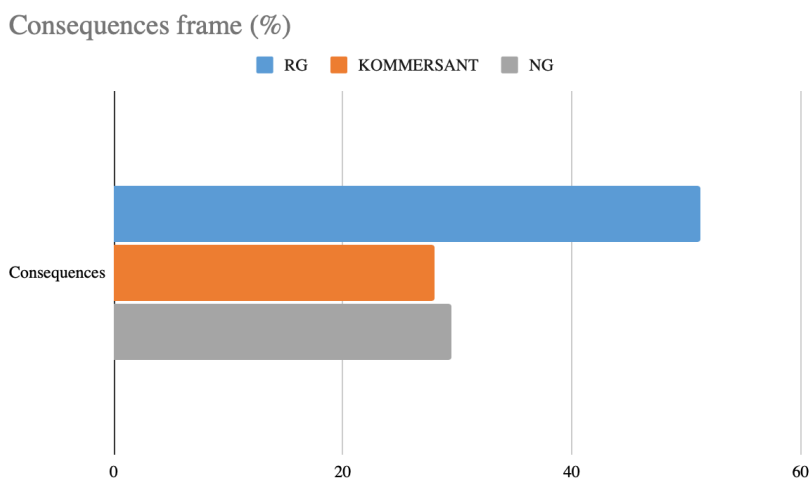
Chart 7. Involvement in corruption

Involvment in corruption frame (%)

RG　KOMMERSANT　NG
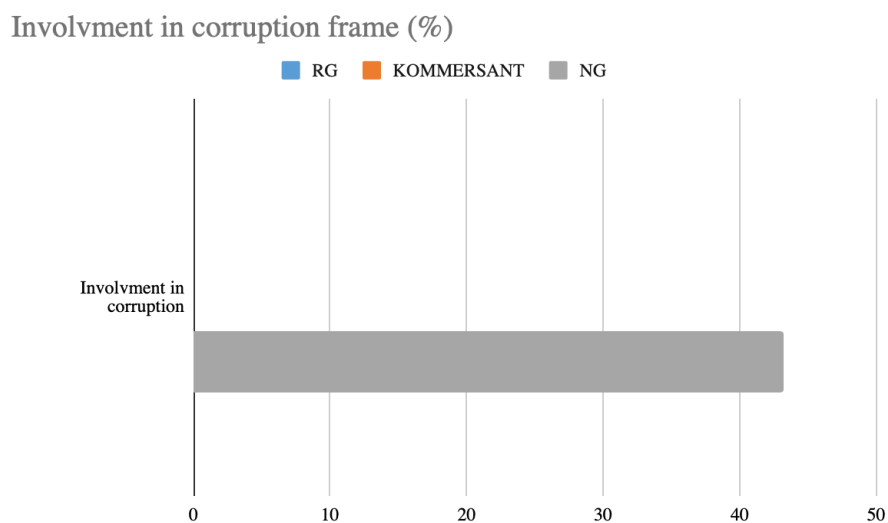
Chart 8. Complains of citizens

Complains of citizens frame (%)

RG   KOMMERSANT   NG

Consequences

Chart 9. Consequences frame

Consequences frame (%)

RG   KOMMERSANT   NG
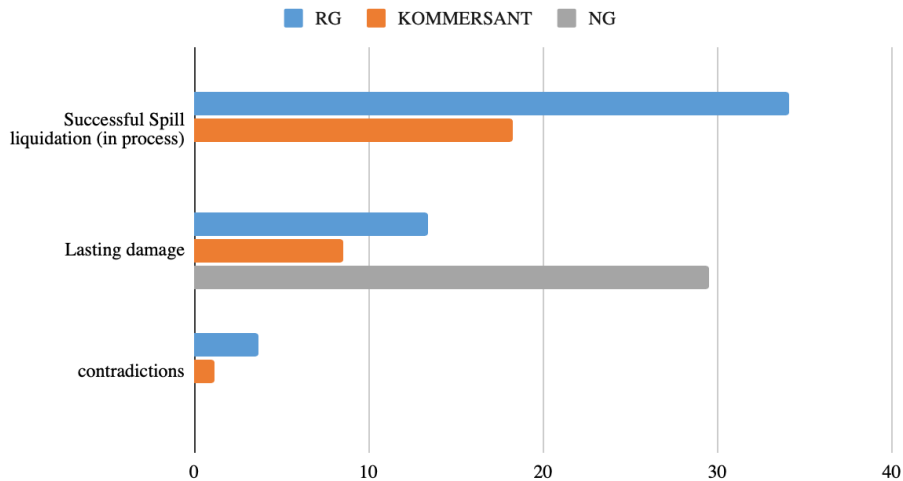

The highest indicator of the presence of consequences frame was identified in RG (51,2%). Two other newspapers covered the consequences of the Norilsk oil spill with approximately the same number - Kommersant (28%) and NG (29,5%).

Chart 10. Consequences frame - attributions

## Consequences frame - attributions (%)

Looking at the attributions of the frame mentioned above, we can make the following results. Firstly, The attribution of Successful Spill liquidation (in the process) was identified in RG (34,1%) and Kommersant (18,3%). NG did not cover the issues related to the successful liquidation of the oil spill in a positive way.

All three selected online newspapers covered the second attribution Lasting damage. In this attribution, NG shows the highest indicator - 29,5%. RG and Kommersant covered this attribution on 13,4% and 8,5%, respectively.

The last attributions demonstrate the absence of one particular point of view and reveal contradictions between perspectives on the disaster. The given attribution was mentioned in RG (3,7%) and Kommersant (1,2%) from the overall number of the researched articles.
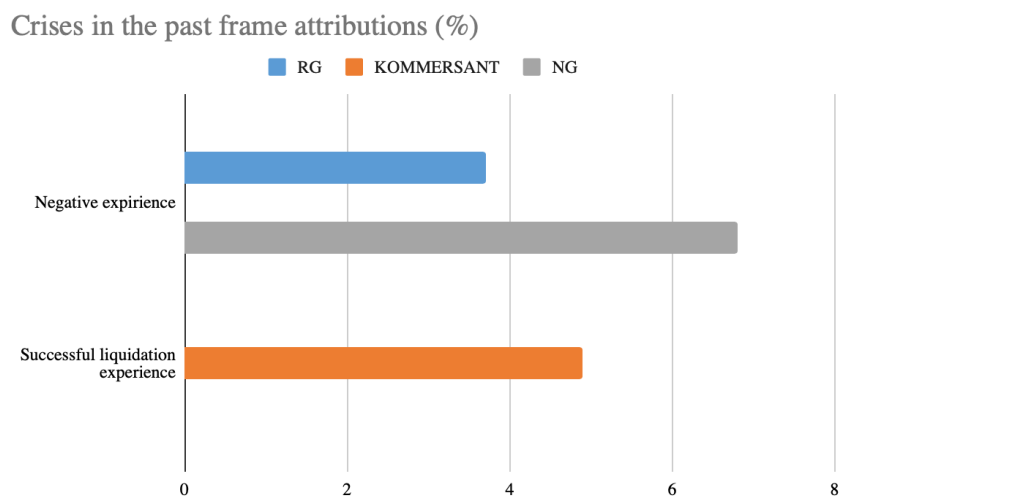
Crises in the past

Chart 11. Crises in the past frame

Crises in the past frame (%)

RG ■ KOMMERSANT ■ NG ■
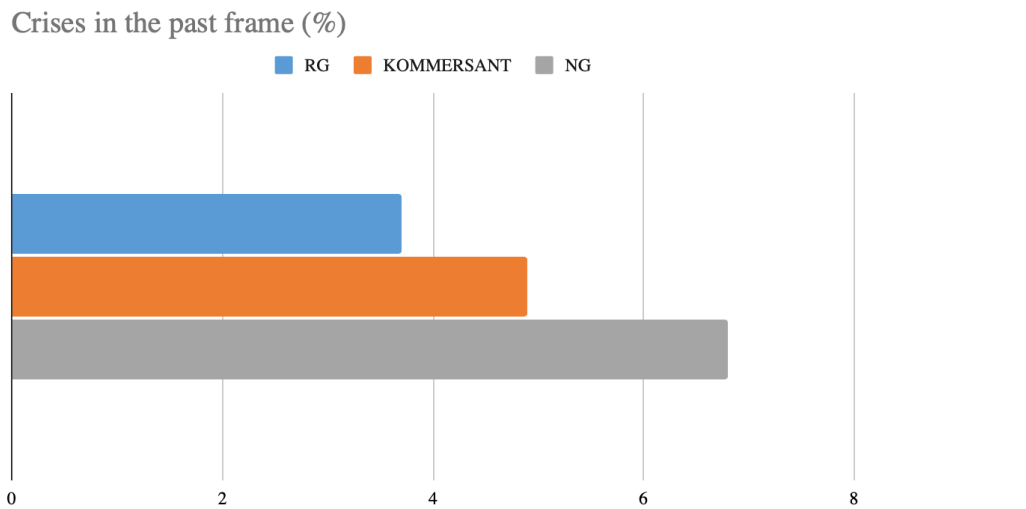
The next frame demonstrates the mentions of the crises that related to the Nornickel company in the past. According to the chart, the highest number of mentions about other crises and negative experiences that happened in Nornickel were covered by online newspapers was NG (6,8%). RG and Kommersant showed the following results 3,7% and 4,9%, respectively, from the overall number of researched articles.

Chart 12. Crises in the past frame - attributions

Crises in the past frame attributions (%)

RG ■ KOMMERSANT ■ NG ■

According to the mentioned frame's attribution, RG and NG mentioned other crises as about a negative experience with the share of 3,7% and 6,8%, respectively.

As mentioned by Kommersant, crises in the past were managed positively and liquidated successfully.

Crises in present

Chart 13. Crises in present frame

Crises in present frame (%)
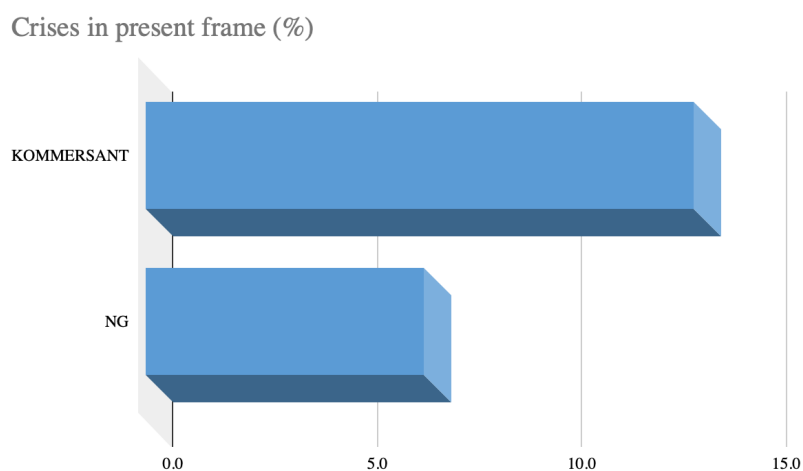
The attribution expresses the presence of other crises related to or that are consequences of the Nornickels' activities. This attribution was mentioned in Kommersant (13,4%) and NG (6,8%). However, in the researched articles of RG, this attribution was not identified.

Conclusion

Media plays a key role in the reader's perception of crises and environmental accidents because most people learn about such accidents from the news media. Therefore it is crucial to study how environmental accidents are framed in the media. The present research aimed to examine the framing of the Norilsk Oil spill in Russian media.

To conduct analyses and compare results, three online newspapers were selected in this study - Rossiyskaya Gazeta, Kommersant, and Novaya Gazeta. In total, 208 articles were coded and analyzed.

Firstly, this study supported the first hypothesis and demonstrated that political influence might change framing of the specific event. Studies results imply that Russian media channels may be a tool for government and pro-kremlin business people to change public opinions.

According to the research findings, frames of Hiding and understatement accident scale, involvement in corruption and complaints of citizens appeared in NG significantly more often than in two pro-government newspapers. Framing consequences of the accident, pro-government media focused on the minority of the accident in Norilsk and demonstrated a lack of negative consequences for the environment. Also, according to the findings, pro-government newspapers are inclined to pollute the informational space with unnecessary details to distract the reader's attention from the accident. However, an independent newspaper NG focused more on the devastating consequences and destructive character of the accident. Independent newspaper NG framed consequences as fatal not just for the local citizens but for the whole Arctic circle. Moreover, NG mentioned hiding, silence, and negligence of the government and Nornickel as the significant reasons for the accident. Also, this study's results showed

that differences in media framing of the accident over time occur between pro-government and independent newspapers.

This study was limited by the small number of studies about environmental communication and media framing of crises in Russia. This limitation did not let us compare and conduct analyses of how media framing concerning the closeness to government changed over time in different crises and analyze how media framing nowadays differs from media framing in the past.

The other limitation is the small sample size that did not allow us to identify significant differences between frames in different newspapers. Even though this study with a small sample size demonstrated a difference in usage and frequency of frames in different newspapers, the bigger sample size would be more detailed.

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Attachments

Appendix 1. Sample

As the size of the table with the sample is too big for the present file, it may be found

[here](#).